

down, and she has been unable to milk in the open. I knew my place was far in excess of £5 an acre, and I did not wish to put further improvements on it, and I applied for permission from the Clifton County Council to build a shed on the road, but they refused to allow it. I am still without a shed, and it is either a case of building a shed on the place or else sell the cows.

37. *Mr. Kerr.*] You could have built it on wheels and not made it a fixture?—Yes; thank you for that information.

38. *Cross-examined by Mr. Bell.*] You say your section was composed of heavy bush?—Yes, very heavy.

39. Were there any timber-mills about in those days?—No.

40. But there were timber-mills in other parts of Taranaki?—Nowhere handy to that place.

41. Your timber was not milled?—No, there was not any of it milled.

42. You have told Mr. Welsh that you did not know of the right to convert. When did Mr. Sarten convert? Was it in 1893?—No.

43. When did he convert?—He held no section at that time.

44. When did he take up his land?—He took up his land some time after.

45. Some time after you had the opportunity of converting?—Yes, I believe it was some time after that he took another section.

46. Was it in 1892 he took up the land?—I suppose it was, but I am not sure.

47. Now, you told Mr. Welsh that you knew all along that your improvements were limited to £5 an acre?—I was under that impression.

48. And yet, knowing that, you put on improvements up to £10 or £12 an acre?—Yes.

49. Why?—I could not help myself. It has been necessary for me to stump and clear a good portion of that land to provide winter feed for the stock. I planted shrubbery to protect the house from the wind and weather, and made other improvements on that place.

50. It was businesslike to put on improvements up to £10 or £12, and it paid you, even although you knew they would be limited to £5 an acre?—I was forced to do it to live on the place; I had no option.

51. *Mr. Kerr.*] Did you pay anything to Terrill for his interest in the lease?—My stepfather purchased it from Terrill, and I asked him the other day if he knew what he paid Terrill, but he was not positive, although he believed it was £20. No improvements had been done when I took the place.

GEORGE PETCH SWORN and examined. (No. 21.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You are a farmer, and live at Waihi, near Waitara?—Yes.

2. And I think you are a lessee under the Act of 1881?—Yes.

3. What is your section?—No. 97, Block V.

4. What is the area of your land?—74 acres.

5. And the rent?—6s. per acre.

6. When did you acquire it?—I think it was in 1897, in January.

7. What did you pay for it?—£200.

8. Whom did you buy from?—Mr. James Bayly.

9. Was it improved at that time?—Yes, it was grassed and fenced in, and one division fence across it.

10. What are the improvements at present?—About £9 or £10 an acre, I think.

11. When you purchased you knew of the £5 limit for improvements?—Yes.

12. When you purchased did you know or hear that there was a right to surrender that lease and take another instead under the Act of 1892?—No, I did not.

13. Did you ever hear of that right afterwards?—No, I never heard of it until about a fortnight ago.

14. Have you lived on that land all the time since you have had it?—Yes.

15. And still live on it?—Yes.

16. *Cross-examined by Mr. Bell.*] You say it was a fortnight ago that you first heard that you had had the right to convert?—Yes, I never heard of it before.

17. Did you know of a deputation going down to Wellington in 1909 and going into the question of the West Coast leases?—No, I did not.

18. Do you ever talk with other lessees?—Yes, but none of those living near me knew.

19. Nowadays do you not talk with other lessees?—Yes, of course I do.

20. Do you not ever discuss the question of your leases and grievances?—Yes, most of the time.

21. Do you not know that this particular question has been common talk in the district for the last three years?—No, I did not know. I first knew when Mr. Welsh wrote to me about it.

FRANCIS WILLIAM MATTHEWS SWORN and examined. (No. 22.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You are a farmer, and live at Tikorangi?—Yes.

2. And you are a lessee under the Act of 1881?—Yes.

3. What is your section?—Section 48, Block VI.

4. And the acreage?—110 acres.

5. And the rent?—Practically 4s. 8d. an acre.

6. When did you acquire your lease?—In 1904.

7. Whom did you buy it from?—Mrs. Hepworth.

8. What did you pay?—I paid £6 an acre.

9. What were the improvements worth at that time?—I think they were not worth more than £4 an acre.

10. How long had you been in New Zealand at that time?—A little over three years.